

May 15, 1959

Every once in a ~~xxx~~ while the rabbinate becomes the object of attention, criticism and evaluation. Periodicals have a way of writing about rabbis as if what they say were some kind of expose. In real what they usually report ~~falls into one of three classifications:~~ ^{are either} 1. ~~Sometimes~~ the facts ~~are~~ gathered from men who ought not to have been in the rabbinate in the first place and are, ergo, unhappy and bitter. ^{or} 2. Sometimes what they say is perfectly well known by any intelligent Jew. ^{or} 3. Sometimes the comments are just plain false.

About a year ago when Life ran an article on Why Ministers Crack Up -- there was not a thing in the very well done article which any sensitive member of a congregation should not have known.

More to the point -- and missed by the writer -- was a criticism of the ministry itself (Jewish and non Jewish). (It would seem from all expressions taken together that of all professions in our society, the ministry has done far and above the worst job of public relations. Only the fewest really know what the work of a rabbi or priest or minister may be. So bad is this conception of the work of the minister that the American public hardly knows what to expect from men in the ministry and candidates for the ministry or rabbinate often do not know what it is they ~~are getting themselves into.~~ ^{may expect in a life devoted to the profession.}

For instance, a feature article in American Judaism in November carried a lovely piece called "A Letter to My son who wants to be a Rabbi".

It was sensitively done. It outlined much good advice for a candidate for the rabbinate. But it omitted what many of ^{rabbis} us would ^{know} consider to be the essence of the rabbinical function. ^{i.e. the rabbi's function as teacher} Since it did, many readers will draw wrong conclusions and our understanding of the profession in not ^{in the least} advanced.

I am more concerned however with two other articles which appeared ^{recently} in a nationally famous journal:

the Jewish Spectator. There three writers approached the subject: one editorialized on the status of the rabbinate in the country today, ^{another} one wrote under the title "I left the Rabbinate" and the ^{last} other declared "I Remained in the Rabbinate".

As I read it seemed to me that ^(not a rabbi) ~~only~~ the editor had most to say: ^{she} ~~pointing~~ ^{ed} out the tremendous changes that have taken place in the function and office of the rabbinate in recent generations.

In essence Dr. Rosmarine sums it up this way:

"There is concern," she says "over the eclipse of the rabbi as a student and teacher by the Rabbi who functions as an all around religious leader and who therefore has little time to study and to teach."

No doubt about it: she is correct in saying that the "Tal^ud student rabbi who serves the community by dedication to scholarship is alien to the American congregational pattern."

The reasons are simply: the demands of American congregational life upon the rabbi as preacher, pastor, teacher of ~~the~~ elementary classes, religious functionary and community representative preclude any time for personal study.

I do not know where the author gets her figures but she is conservatively correct when she says that ~~xxx~~ "Most rabbis work 14 hours a day". (*I & others* In my own case I would very often regard 14 hours as a welcome minimum)

Curiously, in the same issue of this journal an anonymous rabbi identifying himself only as 29 years old and having a crew cut, writes why he is leaving the rabbinate. (But his reasons are not those of dissatisfaction with lack of time for the major functions of the American rabbinate or for scholarship.

what he finds personally disabling:
He laments the fact that most pulpit committees like "young rabbis", that most congregants are juvenile in their

no doubt about it: she is correct in saying that the "blind student rabbi who serves the community by dedication to scholarship is also to the American congregational pattern."

The reasons are simple: the demands of American congregational life upon the rabbi as preacher, pastor, teacher of its elementary religious functions and community representative preclude any time for personal study. I do not know where the author gets her figures but she is conservatively correct when she says that ~~xxx~~ "most rabbis work 14 hours a day". (In my own case I would very often regard 14 hours as a welcome minimum)

Obviously, in the same issue of this journal an anonymous rabbi identifying himself only as 29 years old and having a crew cut, writes who he is leaving the rabbinate. But his reasons are not those of dissatisfaction with lack of time for the major functions of the American rabbinate or for scholarship. He laments the fact that most pulpits committees like "young rabbis", that most congregations are juvenile in their

religious understanding and are emotionally retarded spiritually, that the Rabbinate has not the proper respect from congregants ~~by~~ ~~virtue~~ of the rabbi's learning, that the rabbi must be a fund-raiser, a ^{good} ~~mix~~ mixer, efficient at admisnistration and even janitorial duties in smaller congregations and that the rabbis wife will be attacked if she is too pretty or too plain, too active or too inactive, ~~And~~ and finally that he had to work far too hard and long with too little reward either in respect or in income. So he left the rabbinate.

Much of what the young rabbi ~~says~~ ^{the rabbi} says is true. But what ~~he~~ needed was a rabbi--- a counselor who might accelerate his own maturity.

A respondent in the next issue who did not hide behind anonymity and who has spent his long and useful life in a ^{very} small congregation declared many of the rewards of a rabbinical life which persuaded him despite its drawbacks to remain in the service of God and his people. But thru all his defence runs the unspoken and unmistakable indication that ~~he~~ the wise and

and competent ^{that} rabbi is the one who not only understands other people but himself:

He puts it this way: "A man's happiness depends upon the measure to which he lives up to his own capabilities. This is within the power of everyone, no matter where he lives and works."

He might have gone further: It is within the ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ Power of everyone no matter what his profession or business. Much of the unhappiness in the rabbinate is not unique to the rabbinate but would be part of the

man's problem no matter what his work or profession.

my guess: The man who left the rabbinate will be no happier elsewhere

It is because the values of a life's work are transferable to any line of endeavor that it is important for us to consider. ^{these things} We all become discouraged at ~~xxxxx~~ times. (No job, no art, no task -- even that of parenthood is without its hazards and its moments of stress and disappointment. But those who run away, do so, I think, because they cannot see the larger goal or ^{believe} ~~trust~~ the ^{possibility} ultimate effect of their work. ^{possibility of achieving}

are too

We ~~become~~ entranced with immediate results, we value only what we see right before our eyes. In an age ^{when} of gross importance ^{is} being placed upon technical sciences-- we become impatient with the long slow ~~per~~ process of maturation and development. (These are the work of the teacher, the parent, the rabbi. [We can't see tomorrow ~~what~~ the fruits of what we plant today. Be the estimation of the rabbi what it will be by the American Jewish community, the rabbis themselves + all in fields of education & guidance & politics must continue to have faith in themselves, going about their work with deliberateness and with conviction. The same is true of any man in any work who has faith in what he does.

(Last week mine was the very high honor to dedicate a sanctuary-- a new building erected by members of a congregation I once served as rabbi. (It is a fact that many of the experiences which drove the young rabbi out of the rabbinate happened to me ^{over & again} in that congregation. ^{I would like to think they had gone out in the present incarnation} But other things happened too. (The effect of many hours of teaching found their mark, patience found its mark and perhaps even persistence found its goal.

I think all of us play that kind of a role
in life. We work often for immediate results.
But in the larger sense, we ^{should} work most zealously
for those values which are seen in growing and
maturing children, in ^{gradually developing} a better community, in
^{fostering} broader sympathies and ^{a deeper &} greater faith. These are
built not in a day's work but in a life's
dedication. It's the work of a rabbi, to be sure,
but it ^{shall remain too} ~~is always~~ everyone's work and everyone's
hope.